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 HD **COP15 negotiations reach crucial decision point for global agreement to protect nature; Latest draft includes '30-by-30' target that Canada has pushed for, and the dollar amounts to be provided to developing countries**
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Delegates at COP15, the [United Nations biodiversity conference](#) in Montreal, were approaching a historic decision late Sunday night over whether to adopt a new global agreement to protect nature.

Included in the latest draft of the agreement – known as the global biodiversity framework – is the requirement to conserve 30 per cent of the planet by 2030. The “30-by-30” target is one that [Canada, among several other countries, has pushed for](#) at the talks.

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Other targets specify dollar amounts to be provided to developing countries, which account for the largest share of the planet’s ecosystems and species, in order to ensure that the goals of an agreement can be met.

The proposed framework also lists a number of additional targets that are intended to stem the causes of biodiversity loss and promote the sustainable use of nature.

“I think it’s a great text; I think it’s a very balanced text,” said federal Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault ahead of what was expected to be an hours-long plenary session Sunday evening where representatives were set to take up the draft framework as the conference neared its conclusion.

But while the current form of the agreement includes ambitious targets, scientists and environmental advocates have said the proposal does not go far enough to put the planet on a positive course.

[At COP15, Indigenous leaders to show how their conservation efforts can shape global biodiversity agreement](#)

Compared with earlier drafts, the framework’s overarching goal now looks to the year 2050 as the point by which all ecosystems should be maintained, enhanced, or restored. Gone is any reference to intermediate steps along the way to keep the vision of the framework on track. This is distinct from the 30-by-30 target, which only refers to the amount of area conserved, not the overall results of conservation efforts.

“That’s the bad part,” said Anne Larigauderie, executive secretary of IPBES, the international scientific body whose reports on species and habitat loss informs the UN Convention on Biodiversity. “That’s certainly the result of political compromise.”

Dr. Larigauderie added that some of the specific targets in the draft were stronger than she expected to see. Among them is the target of cutting the use of pesticides in half by 2030 in order to protect insect species that are vital for the pollination of food crops and other plants.

The Montreal meeting was originally scheduled to take place in China but was delayed two years by the pandemic. It is a once-in-a-decade opportunity for the 196 countries that are signatories to the convention to reach consensus on how to protect the natural world from a multitude of threats including destruction of habitat, overharvesting, pollution and climate change.

China retained the presidency of COP15, and has chaired the meeting since it commenced on Dec. 6, with Canada acting as host.

A key feature of the talks has been the tension between ambition – meaning how much to protect and how soon – and the resources needed to achieve that end.

Efforts to hammer out a clean draft of the global framework in a working group session before formal talks began proved fruitless. Instead, delegates were handed different versions of the text with hundreds of brackets around words and phrases denoting points of disagreement. Many of those brackets were still in place by the weekend when China presented its version as the best option for consensus.

Mr. Guilbeault, who has been engaged in the high-level portion of the meeting since Thursday, said that while some countries were still pushing for changes to the draft, the talks were moving in a direction that could lead to a deal as early as Sunday night.

“I’ve heard a lot of support for the text that’s been presented,” he said.

Included in the draft as of Sunday:

- * The 30-by-30 target, which applies to “terrestrial, inland water, and coastal and marine areas,” especially areas of high importance to global biodiversity;

- * An acknowledgment of the US\$700-billion annual gap in the estimated cost of preserving nature globally versus the amount that is currently spent;

- * Targets to close the gap by reducing government subsidies that promote nature loss by at least US\$500-billion annually and increasing expenditures by at least US\$200-billion annually;

- * An increase in financing from wealthy countries to the developing world to aid in conservation efforts from US\$10-billion to at least US\$20-billion per year by the year 2025 and at least US\$30-billion by the year 2030;

- * A recognition of the rights and role of Indigenous peoples in protecting nature globally;

- * A target that calls for legal and policy measures to ensure the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources, including digital sequence information, that are derived from nature with a requirement that a “significant increase” in benefits shared be achieved by 2030.

Many observers at the meeting described the agreement as a starting point which, if implemented, would offer more protection for global biodiversity than any previous document has done, though not to the degree needed to be a true gamechanger.

“To a certain extent, it is bringing everybody up to the best level of collective ambition possible,” said Eddy Perez, international climate diplomacy director for Climate Action Network Canada.

Mark Opel, finance lead with the Campaign for Nature, a global environmental coalition, called the US\$20-billion and US\$30-billion targets among the most consequential of the proposed agreement.

“Now we’ve got real numbers to talk about,” he said, while adding that the annual amount that experts say is needed by developing countries is at least US\$60-billion.

Justina Ray, president and senior scientist of Wildlife Conservation Society Canada, said on Sunday that delegates needed to resist any effort to weaken the draft.

“I fervently hope nothing unravels,” she said.

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